

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 08SANSALVADOR1250, AMB LEON: VP CANDIDATE ZABLAH TO BOOST TICKET

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g.

#08SANSALVADOR1250.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08SANSALVADOR1250	2008-11-03 21:49	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy San Salvador

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.wikileaks.elfaro.net/es/201106/notas/4565/>

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSN #1250 3082149
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 032149Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0269
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 001250

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/31/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ES](#)

SUBJECT: AMB LEON: VP CANDIDATE ZABLAH TO BOOST TICKET

Classified By: Robert I. Blau, CDA, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Rene Leon, Salvadoran Ambassador to the U.S. and platform coordinator for the Avila campaign told PolCouns October 30 that he believes that (center-right, pro-U.S.) ARENA presidential candidate Rodrigo Avila,s selection of former Minister of Economy Arturo Zablah as his vice presidential running mate will help ARENA win the March 15

presidential election. He expressed concern with what he described as plans by the (left-wing) FMLN to lay the groundwork for protests and possible violence in the event the FMLN loses the election. He said that ARENA's internal tracking polls following the Zablah announcement place Avila about two points behind FMLN candidate Mauricio Funes. Leon said that he expected Avila's platform would be complete by the end of November and that it would provide an added boost in the polls. End Summary.

12. (C) Rene Leon, Salvadoran Ambassador to the U.S. on a leave of absence to serve as platform coordinator for the Avila campaign told PolCouns October 30 he was pleased with Avila's choice of Arturo Zablah as his running mate and believes Zablah will help Avila win the March 15 presidential vote. Leon was critical of ARENA's legislative slate, which he assessed could have been better constructed. Given the risk of ARENA spending several years in opposition, he said, the party (and Avila) should have included more subject matter experts in defense, security, and fiscal policy. While the candidate slate does include several new faces, he said, it will neither generate excitement among voters nor leave ARENA well positioned in opposition.

13. (C) Leon was concerned with what he described as moves by the (left-wing) FMLN's presidential candidate Mauricio Funes to lay the groundwork for an election protest with incendiary rhetoric about fraud and hinting ARENA might try to steal the election. Leon noted that if the FMLN wins the presidential election, the FMLN will make no claims of irregularities, but are preparing the way for protests and, possibly, violence, if the results do not favor Funes.

14. (C) Leon described the recent evolution of ARENA's internal tracking polls. He said that after Avila's July 13 event at San Salvador's Cuscatlan Stadium, he had risen to a one-point lead over Funes. When fuel prices subsequently spiked, he dropped to a seven-point deficit. Following the October 9 announcement of Zablah as Avila's running mate, he climbed to a consistent deficit of about two points. Leon said ARENA campaign director Cesar Funes (no relation to Mauricio Funes) was hoping for a five point lead by Christmas, which Leon believes is unrealistic. Leon said he would be extremely satisfied to enter the holiday season with a consistent, credible lead of two points.

15. (C) Leon said he hoped to have Avila's platform completed by the end of November. He said he was pleased with Avila's improving focus at campaign events and expected the platform to provide a further boost in the polls. Leon said he hoped Zablah would not simply provide a short boost with party faithful followed by a longer-term drag on ARENA's candidacy, something he said was a distinct possibility. Leon said the campaign was working to focus Zablah's efforts on four themes: Pledging to end abuses of power; recognizing and offering solutions to economic pressures on Salvadoran families; subtly signaling separation between Avila and current Salvadoran President Elias Antonio "Tony" Saca and distancing Avila from rumors of corruption in the Saca administration; and, providing assurance that an Avila-Zablah administration will address the economic crisis facing El Salvador.

16. (C) Leon, who worked for Zablah during the Cristiani administration (1989-1994) said he believed that while Zablah was fully on message with Avila now, the honeymoon during an Avila-Zablah administration would be short, perhaps only three months, at which point "both will want a divorce."

17. (C) Comment: Despite being behind in public polls, ARENA believes it can and will win the March 15 presidential elections. While privately funded polls in the (right-leaning) Salvadoran media have consistently shown Funes with about a four-point lead, San Salvador's Technological University/CIOPS most recent poll gave Funes an eighteen point advantage, consistent with other university polls in recent weeks. Funes' reaction to the divergent numbers was to make a public statement suggesting

ARENA-instigated fraud. The university numbers are feeding a sense of certain victory in the FMLN, and lend credence to Leon's concerns about potential violence should Avila pull out a win.

BLAU